

Live and Preach Christ

by Erlo Stegen

The scattered Christians used persecution as an opportunity to spread the gospel, demonstrating the power and sovereignty of God.

Duration: 1:08:01

Scripture: Acts 8

Topics: "Preach Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the theme is taken from Acts 8:4, which talks about the scattered believers going everywhere preaching the word. The church in Jerusalem was growing rapidly, but with the martyrdom of Stephen and the presence of Saul, persecution and hatred towards the brethren increased. However, despite the opposition, the scattered Christians continued to spread the gospel wherever they went. The sermon emphasizes the importance of not just talking about the gospel, but also bearing fruit and being faithful in sharing the message of Christ.

Transcript

Oh God, I ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you would meet with many today. Amen. We find our text in the book of Acts.

From chapter 8 and we read from verse 1. Our soul was consenting to his death, that is, of Stephen. At that time, a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the Apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him.

As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore, those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them, and the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip.

We'll read thus far. The theme of this service is taken from this verse 4 where it says those scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Let me repeat that again.

The scattered ones went everywhere preaching the word. Now it was in Jerusalem. The church was multiplying.

There were 3,000 and then 5,000, and they continued to grow. The Lord was at work. His miracles were happening.

But with the martyrdom of Stephen and his being stoned to death, with Saul being present, Saul was very glad about the killing of Stephen. There were those who mocked at that time. Today there are theologians who mock and they say, well, what does Paul know anyway? At that time he was still very young.

Now we don't know how young he was. He might have been young, but he had a high position. In his particular position, they couldn't be below 24.

He could have been 24 to 40 years of age when this incident took place. It seemed that he had the mandate to do this. So that hatred grew.

This act of Saul's in being glad about the killing of Stephen became fashionable, and this idea to persecute the Christians grew and grew. He pursued the Christians even into their homes and arrested them and dragged them off to jail. You see that whatever decision you make is something which grows.

If you decide for the Lord, it is a growing decision and it increases daily. But if you decide for the devil, even if you're a preacher and you allow something of the devil in your life, that thing increases, it gains momentum, and eventually you'll do something which even the pagans will frown upon. But if you've decided for the Lord, it is something that grows and the momentum is evident and visible to all those around you.

But if you don't grow, then I want to tell you, you are dead. No growth equals death. You are like a corpse.

You are being consumed by maggots. While you walk around, you are dead. If you're a child of the Lord, your growth is evident, is visible as you grow in the Lord.

However, if you decide for the devil in any area of your life, that thing increases and grows until even the pagans around you are astonished. And Saul, he was zealous for God, so-called, but it was with a false zeal. It was deception in Saul's life.

And this hatred against the believers was something which grew and increased. And the heartbreaking thing is this, that they thought they were serving God. They were fighting for God.

Very sincere. But sincerely wrong. I don't know if there are people like that here.

Zealous. They're full of zeal for some cause, but it's not of the Lord. They need to repent of that.

They need to return to the Lord. And the Word of God says here that a great persecution arose in Jerusalem. It was an enormous persecution.

And the Christians left their homes and furniture and had to flee because of this persecution. Only the apostles kept by the power of God were able to remain in Jerusalem. And it says, many scattered in the direction of Judea, some towards Samaria.

But what is wonderful, and that is the theme of this message, is that every one of them, wherever they were scattered to, propagated the gospel. So Satan, even though he is Satan, he is like a cat which doesn't die. For from the beginning, he should have admitted his failure.

For Satan has been in the business of attacking and persecuting for a long time, and he has failed. Someone said, they quote Winston Churchill's words, never give up, never give up, never give up. It can be a good thing, but an evil thing, because if you're on the wrong track, you won't give up.

If you're on the right track, never give up. Be faithful right to the end. When the Boers, Petra Tief, was killed, the men wanted to flee, but the women said, no, we can't.

Well, a worldly person would say, cheers for the women. But the devil has got one evil thing, that he doesn't give up. He should give up and bow to God, but he doesn't.

So Saul just continued growing in his persecution and hatred of the brethren, but at the same time, what happened was the scattered Christians just caused the growth of the church. Remember in Acts chapter one, Jesus said to his disciples, remain here till you receive power from on high. Then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth.

They received the Holy Spirit, and they propagated the gospel in Jerusalem. And here was Satan trying to destroy this work, trying to utterly rout this ministry. But the true gospel can never be defeated, it can never be squashed.

It can never be defeated, it can never be squashed. It can never be destroyed. It can never be destroyed, it can never be destroyed.

As it has been said, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. As it has been said, if you take a Christian and jail him, or even kill him, you're actually defeating your own aims to destroy the gospel, because that will only enhance the gospel, and it will go forth more powerfully than before. And so Satan here, in fighting against the church, achieved the exact opposite.

In fact, he achieved the fulfillment of the Lord's command, that the disciples should go out and preach in Judea and Samaria. So if you feel that Satan is attacking you in some way, and it seems like he's absolutely destroying you and what the Lord is doing in your life, just understand that the Lord will bring about good in what is fitting in his sight. So even if Satan intended to spoil things, even in heaven, but by this act of persecuting the church in Jerusalem, he was actually spreading the gospel to Judea, Samaria, and other areas.

It was difficult in Jerusalem, because of the persecution, with Stephen having been martyred, and it says that the devout men buried him. Now here you'll find, there are various translations and various versions of the Bible, in the Zulu Bible it says, believing men buried Stephen. Devout.

In English, in this particular version it says, devout men, so good and upright, godly men, went and buried Stephen. Devout and pious Jews buried him. So as some translations indicate that they were believing men of the church, and some commentators and expositors say, Yes sir.

But there are some commentators who say, But there are some commentators who point out, that these were devout men, Jewish men, who were becoming favorable towards the faith. Like with the burial of the Lord Jesus, he wasn't buried by the disciples, instead rather by believing Jews. Like Joseph, and history tells us, that if a person was stoned to death, because of the decision of the Sanhedrin, the council of the priests, or was put to death by them, or was decapitated, or whatever way the capital punishment was carried out, if it was by the decision of the Sanhedrin, then, you were not allowed to display public grief.

It was not allowed. It was forbidden. You could mourn in secret.

And so some commentators say, that the church couldn't take Stephen from the rubble of the stones, and go and bury him, but there were some, there were some Jews who were secret disciples, who were sympathetic regarding Stephen. And they came, like Joseph of Arimathea, and took the corpse. And the Greek, indicates that they didn't just go and dump him in a grave, but a proper burial ceremony was performed.

They took his body, buried him in the proper way, and there was great lamentation over him. Or one could say they picked up everything. It could be that, as happens with a person who is stoned to death, that they are broken and in pieces even.

It may be that brains are spilled on the stones. The skull breaks into pieces. Some of you remember when we visited the crash site of Samora Moshel, where his plane went down, we found bits of bone and bits of skull lying around.

Dogs were busy eating these white bones. Now, when it comes to stoning, that the person's body might be broken, the head, the skull broken in pieces. And in the Greek, as if they put all the pieces together.

And these Jewish believing men made great lamentation over him. They grieved. Go and bury that corpse.

And pick up those pieces. Nevertheless, it indicates, whatever interpretation, it indicates the terrible atmosphere that there was in Jerusalem. Hell was let loose.

It was as if there was this determination to completely extinguish every trace of the church on earth. But no, for our hero, the one who was raised up, the one who ascended into heaven, of whom the Bible says, God has highly exalted him, our Lord Jesus. He sovereignly controls the whole earth sitting there in heaven.

And as we've heard from John and Michael, of some of the difficult circumstances, the darkness, we never need to be perturbed by the darkness. Instead, it makes the light to shine brighter. Even as I came into the service today, I began to feel like I should be out there preaching the gospel.

God actually makes it easier. When he allows darkness to have its way and there's such oppression, the Lord makes it easier for his gospel to go forth. And so the Christians were scattered in every direction.

But I don't think that they were grieving about the loss of their cupboards and their tables and chairs and their beds. No, a true Christian is one who can rejoice when he suffers loss, when he is persecuted, because he knows of the eternal reward. If you lose your house, your furniture, everything you've got, and you've got to flee, then you can have pity for yourself.

Full of self-pity. Sorry for yourself. Thank God and praise him that he's broken the neck of all your idols.

You're not serving God, you're serving your home, your furniture.

Your car, your home, your furniture may be your idol. but by this they were all scattered in every direction and in fact the words of the Lord Jesus when he commanded go ye therefore into Judea and Samaria was being fulfilled was a blessing in disguise who's good he lent or beggars will see so no my singer Bonagalli you moan and you groan oh it's so difficult you're in the wrong crawl go to the world go to those that serve the devil that's where you belong but not a Christian Maucon on a who's Khalil which our English to

get away lent or not lent or kushkuti when Indy my aku is says when I go buzz alone who don't call buffers a look at any non-talented on Galileo to look on a cool look in a local who go to Munda happy a fagas and I look up to Lillie and so God organized that they

should be scattered they weren't made to stay put in one place but that they were to go forth all over I get what we forget to Judea Abba Kali who could have such a beggar figure Samaria how such a beggar basho my elava fagas and which is and so when they got to Judea and Samaria they didn't pity themselves about their loss instead they spread the word right there about the Lord Jesus Mikael gave me a Mikael one nigga a paper L Kuluma noise fuzz on a obey unconquered German a young lady with justice and Michael gave me an article about a lady who was a cabinet minister in the Department of Justice in Germany one man who had been invited to that same meeting got a I got here in Gungo Shimon Jango by a now what he who pushed a funnel Hitler none what portray what in Gaga UGT whom Hollywood

cream I'm keepers concede she is no longer a cabinet minister and she has lost her position because she made the statement that President Bush can be equated with Hitler and as this is the same as Hitler and so she was expelled from that position what's a good to our figure or manua who could have Kuluma in what it was a face you start to go so Carla I'm not good for you because of a lot of normal lesson now in Dima your Carla you're not your Carla who was a face and so she was invited to come and speak on the first part of Ephesians chapter 1 and she said ladies and gentlemen as I look at this text I don't know what it means I don't really understand anything of it probably God wants us to hear pious and poetical phrases and not that we don't understand the content of it just that we've

got nice clinging words now nice ringing words I you must forgive me I didn't know that I mentioned it I would have brought it along I can't put it as beautiful as she did and the last part of that portion said and through whom we were cleansed and washed by his blood our sins forgiven and she said of that I don't know what it means I can't understand that God must just be giving us nice words that would sound and good and have a good resonance so it shows that she doesn't know what forgiveness is all about Paul must have written that just to write nice ringing words that have got no meaning it just shows us that heaven and earth wants to bless you whether you go to bed what to mama go to Paul who before you go to ashwagandha I'm Nandi when I read that article I felt like writing a letter

to her to explain something of the wonder and of the truth of this text and to show her that these words from the Bible are not just nice ringing words that sound good but they have content they have real meaning now back to our text where the Christians were scattered in every direction and strict Judaism was they it was putting down its foot insisting on its way if you look at Jerusalem and where it's placed on the map where I'm showing towards the south is Judea below it to the north of Jerusalem Samaria further north Galilee for Israel had been split into three portions by then more 722 that was in 722 BC the king of Assyria had attacked Samaria it was still full of Jews at the time why set up a bar to Tabatica and it I'm a no-tealer I'm a baby all the prominent and wealthy Jews and

just the poor ones remained why set up a zone is his way why later I summary and then he went and took a different pagan nations and planted them to occupy the land there in Samaria but could I get manager and so through history that area became a mixed race because they began to intermingle and intermarry with each other and with the passing of time the hatred between the Samaritans and the Jews grew ever tenser because the Jews looked down upon these low-cost Jews in Samaria you see apartheid is not something that just happened recently and it's even older than the Afrikaners in fact we had a recent

historical meeting in a shower we were one of the royal family pointed out that apartheid was introduced by the English in South Africa long before the Afrikaners you see it was even older

from of ancient times even when our Lord was on earth but Jesus even though there was this tension and hatred between these races Jesus went to the Samaritans and he also commanded his disciples he said you go to Samaria those who are your enemies as Jews you go to them that's the marvelous thing about the gospel that in Christ there is no Jew or Samaritan there's no colored or Indian but the Lord says that we should go to everyone even those who are the proclaimed enemies of your people but you are but you are not called to be exclusivist to defend your people and your nation no the Lord says all people are your people you are to go to all people if you are discriminatory and say no I'm just wanting to protect and defend or fight politically for my people then you still need to meet with

Jesus you need to repent and so these people found themselves in the midst of the Samaritans you might be complaining and say oh look at what has happened to me woe to me and now I'm thrown in the midst of these people no God is using even Satan to fulfill his own will you might say I'm badly treated I'm not given I'm not welcomed well let God open your eyes what does he say about that and he's using that because you're so blind maybe you've forgotten already what he told you before then you just busy with this can't you busy your little baby when it dies you are sorry and you forget what he told you who commanded you busy nendo yako nengan yako was tension between themselves in that nation but they were absolutely free because they could witness about Christ if you receive Jesus you will

want everyone to get to know him I can't believe that Jesus can love can live in your heart without telling others about him excuse me I feel like telling you you're a liar you've got the wrong Jesus not the right one was scattered and they all spoke about Jesus they propagated the gospel wherever they went and history both those who are sympathetic to the faith and historians who are anti-christian confirm the truth of this Justin Martin for instance Justin Marta who was one of the great men of God of that first church he writes about how he was walking on the sand along the beach and a Christian came alongside him and spoke about Jesus and led him to the Lord great men of God were one by simple Christians who couldn't keep quiet and if you can keep quiet the Jesus you've got is a dead

Jesus I'm a daughter gun cool and cool oh I'm not doing on I'm trying to also a great man of God writes that every Christian in whatever career he was following or whatever work he was doing put it very nicely he said but both those these two things go together if you find out God if you find God you can't but manifest it when after you found him what he never come allow a match alone alone salon we am told you found God and you don't manifest him when OT um Tolila Gandhi um um Vesi Pamega Bonnie today's your day where you should get converted and get right and find God and meet with him and then you can't but manifest him if you manifest something else go for counseling and just don't play church get down to business you're a bad man if you confess that you're a Christian and you don't

manifest God to high and low poor rich worker you're a bad man and so to Italian said you both find him and show him but what is the Jesus who is the Jesus found that you cannot show Christ are you and you yet you're blind to it's why the blind leading the blind if you're following something else if you do not show by having found God and manifest God then it shows that the world is in you you like a whore of the world you even if you don't do it outwardly there's this whoredom inside you you're immoral inside you you need the Lord to come in and to get that out may God show you your emptiness someone said you're an empty-headed man but you're not only an empty-headed man you're an empty-hearted man.

you're still sexually abusive. But when I met with Jesus, I put that aside, I took the Bible and I began to go into homes, into these huts where there was smoke and it was very poor and I'd sit on the ground and share the gospel with these people.

I had no time for sports anymore. I would go to the round huts, into the mountains and valleys and tell them about Jesus. And you go to rugby matches, you go to cricket matches, you go to sports field and you've never gone out into a hut and sat down and told them about Jesus.

What a hypocrite and pharisee you are, don't call yourself a Christian. I won't accept it, never. They ask John, what is a heathen? Now you know what a heathen is, maybe you're the biggest one.

But John, what is a heathen? When I was 23, I went to school, I went to school as a heathen. I didn't go to school, I didn't go to school, I didn't go to school. I heard of DSS at a prayer meeting, only 20 or 30 come or to the choir, well then it's a pagan school and teachers take note of this as well, these are unconverted children.

What is a heathen? So do not be deceived, recognise what is truly of him and what is not, that which is of a goat and that which is a sheep, otherwise the Lord comes back and he is returning and you'll be shocked to discover who are real sheep and who are just sheep. Dear friends, those of you who speak German, did you understand what I said? And you Africans, did you understand what I said? I meant, you English speaking people, have you heard? What are you going to do about it? Stop being a geese, or a duck, dive into the water, come out on the other side of the river and you're still dry. And you speak African languages or other nations, wherever you might be, wherever you're from, I don't want to stand before God and be found guilty of not telling the truth as it is.

And you dear visitors, whom I honour, let's face the truth squarely. We are not to play around. Let us pray.

Let's stand to our feet and pray. Lord, by your Holy Spirit, please reach the depths of our hearts. That it will be the end of having many people and yet most not having met the Lord.

But grant, Lord, that each one who calls himself a Christian would be a true Christian. Amen.

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